Autism SA: The Leaders in ASD

The organisation was initially established by families seeking access to the best information, education, treatment and support. Our founding members advocated for acceptance and understanding, and encouraged research and leadership in the community. Throughout the 50+ years that Autism SA has been operating, the organisation has remained true to its founding aim - working to ensure people with ASD get the most out of life.

The individuals and families we support are at the core of everything Autism SA does. Our expert team provides person centred services and support, implementing world class, evidence based practice to deliver innovative and individualised approaches. Whether you are a person living with ASD, or a family member, carer, teacher or allied health professional, Autism SA can assist.

Autism SA is a strong representative and advocacy voice for people in our community. We work to improve life outcomes for people with ASD by providing and facilitating the very best information, connections, expertise, education, services and support. The organisation is accredited and registered as a provider through:

- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) Package
- Better Start
- South Australian State Government Provider Panel

Since 1964, Autism SA has been recognised as the leading provider of support and assistance to individuals and families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A society that enables people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to get the most out of life.

To improve life outcomes for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by providing and facilitating the very best information, connections, expertise, education, services, support and a strong representative voice.

Our Vision

Our Mission

Our Values

Together we strive

Truth in decision making

Courage to take action

Respect for each other

Adventure in how we do things

Celebrate contributions to making the workplace better
This has been a significant period for our sector, with many lessons learnt as the disability landscape continues to take shape under the auspices of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The coming few years will be critical as the NDIS moves to the next stage of implementation - involving transitioning to the full Scheme - and the increasing prevalence of ASD and its impact is realised. The reported growth in the number of people being diagnosed with ASD has been evidenced by the number of children registered for the NDIS trial site in South Australia (SA), and is further supported by Autism SA’s verified diagnoses, which indicate prevalence as high as 1 in 29 boys aged 10 years. While it has been reported in the media that this poses a cost blowout risk to the Scheme, the upside is that the NDIS is revolutionising the provision of services to Australians living with disabilities, with the demand side reforms ensuring people have greater choice and control over the support they receive.

With this, however, comes the supply side, where there have been many new partnerships and providers entering the market to meet the increasing demand. While Autism SA applauds any programs and initiatives that enhance the lives of individuals with ASD, their families and carers, it is important that mechanisms are in place to ensure quality assurance of service delivery and ethical practices. This is critical to maintaining the integrity of service providers in the community - including those entering schools - and to avoiding any potential to exploit those in need.

To this end, Autism SA continues to invest - as the sector authority for influencing and leading social policy - in providing a strong voice for, and with, the ASD community. In particular, as the NDIS gathers momentum, it has been important and necessary that Autism SA continues to work with decision makers and stakeholders to provide ready access to critical information and ASD-specific expertise to ensure relevant considerations are provisioned for. We also ensure a well informed, central information point exists for ASD, so our community is able to make informed choices.

Internally, we continue to evolve with a person centred service and support focus to provide innovation, growth and service excellence to benefit our clients and the wider ASD community. We have spent much of the past year building our internal capacity to further our NDIS readiness. The coming financial year will bring with it the release of Autism SA’s new strategic plan, and with this will be the announcement of a number of new initiatives and partnerships, as well as the continuation of existing relationships to meet the needs of the ASD community.

I would like to acknowledge and extend my sincere thanks and deepest gratitude to our community for its unfailing contribution, support and commitment to helping us continue on our path. Autism SA currently has more than 9500 people registered for services, with almost 5000 in the 0-14 trial site category. To underpin this, there are more than 150 staff, numerous volunteers, business partners, sponsors and our Board members.

Special thanks to three Board members who have departed during this financial year - Raphael Murphy, Darren Gibbins and Peter Davey. I thank them for their expertise and invaluable contributions and am delighted to note that all three continue to be involved in the disability sector in various capacities.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Louise Davies, prior to the welcoming of our new Chief Executive Officer, Barrie Elvish, who has embraced the organisation’s challenges and opportunities.

Lastly, enormous thanks to the staff and volunteers of Autism SA for their unwavering dedication and hard work, particularly as the organisation has faced challenging times while navigating the uncharted waters of the NDIS. Their enthusiasm, passion and drive is truly contagious.

I look forward to continuing, with the Autism SA team and Board, the ongoing commitment to meet our mission of improving the life outcomes for people with ASD by providing and facilitating the very best information, connections, expertise, education, services and support, while always providing a strong representative voice for our community.
It’s said that a picture is worth a thousand words and this adage is once again proven true in the 2014 review of the capabilities of the NDIA that displayed on its front cover a picture of a plane being built while in flight. In many ways this is an effective image of the current state of the NDIS and its resultant impact on organisations such as Autism SA. The message is clear; the NDIS plane has taken off, its construction is a work in progress, but it remains airborne due to the ongoing work of the development team and participating organisations.

Similarly, the year under review has been one of significant change and ongoing development for Autism SA. After a long and highly productive term as Acting Chief Executive Officer, Jon Martin resigned to take up my appointment at the start of December 2014. Since then, the Board has endorsed a refined organisational structure designed to underwrite our stated mission and values, advance our strategic priorities and better prepare us for responding effectively to the evolving needs and expectations of the ASD community in times of ongoing change. The new structure coincided with the completion of a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, wherein all parties acknowledged the impact of the NDIS, while at the same time aiming to compensate staff fairly for the great work they undertake.

In September 2014 the iMasocial project, a social development program for children aged 8-12 years, was successfully launched. The 34 session program, that is also available online, has to date 380 participants - with a new group starting each quarter.

Autism SA played a key foundation role in the launch by HewlettPackard, the Federal Government, and Danish company Specialist People Foundation, of an innovative internship program for 11 ASD young people. The project involves the successful participants completing an internship with HP Australia.

Early feedback from the project coordinators indicates increased ASD awareness within the workplace, enhanced cross pollination of ideas, and unique learning outcomes.

In March, following an extensive community awareness, training and professional development programs throughout the year, including through our partnership with PsychMed, and delivering - as a member of the national Partnerships between Education and the Autism Community (PEAC) consortium - a range of one day workshops, extended sessions and professional workshops throughout SA. Combined, these were attended by more than 600 parents, teachers, carers and allied health workers.

The training year culminated with a one day workshop for 350 parents, professionals and interested community members delivered by internationally renowned expert Dr Jed Baker. Participants were overwhelming in their appreciation of the day and the incisive information and current research findings Dr Baker shared.

Unfortunately, due to a withdrawal of government funding, the much valued Autism Advisor Program (AAP) was discontinued in SA in June 2015 after seven years of successful operation. During the year, the program had contact with more than 500 families/carers and provided 155 supplementary appointments - and another 300 participants attended one or more of the program’s Early Days Workshops.

Autism SA (then the Autistic Children’s Association) was established by parents in 1964 due to a lack of support and education of children with autism in SA. The oldest association of its type in Australia, the organisation has evolved since then to become the state’s recognised authority for all ASD related issues and the preferred service provider.
CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

Autism SA’s Recognition Awards are designed to celebrate the many individuals and entities that make outstanding contributions to the organisation and the wider ASD community.

In 2014, during our 50th anniversary celebrations, Autism SA recognised nominees across eight categories at an event held at the Goodwood Community Centre. Attended by more than 230 people, including the Governor of South Australia, Autism SA’s corporate partners, ambassadors, Board members and staff – as well as individuals, families and carers living with ASD – the awards highlighted the critical importance of community support for and awareness of ASD.

Award recipients included:
- Hilary Johnson - Professional Achievement Award
- Dr Richard Cockington - Kate Parker Exemplary Service Award
- APAC 2013 Committee - Autism SA Business Partnership Award
- Adelaide Airport Ltd - Autism SA Patronage Award
- MHS Property - Patron Ambassador Award
- Biaoda Poultry - Parent/Carer Award
- Ray and Kathy Dufty - Individual Achievement Award
- Davis Irvin Speck (12 years and younger) - Autism SA Ambassador Award
- Samuel van Enem (13 years and older) - Autism SA Ambassador Award
- Jean Boulter - Outgoing Autism SA Chief Executive Officer, Jon Martin, was also recognised as an Honorary Autism SA Ambassador.

EMBRACING THE DIGITAL AGE

Engaging with our community and delivering upon Autism SA’s mission to provide and facilitate the very best information, connections, expertise, education, services and support drove the continued development of our social and digital media platforms throughout the 2014/15 year.

As the leading authority for ASD in SA, we understand the critical importance of connecting and communicating with stakeholders. Throughout the year we worked to maximise the potential of our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms and further developed the Autism SA website to attract new and repeat visitors.

Our Facebook page experienced a 32 per cent upturn in likes on the previous year, with an average of 3000 people interacting with the page on a monthly basis and posts reaching some 34,000 people each month.

Autism SA’s Twitter community also grew by 20 per cent. Some 11,600 people saw tweets sent by the organisation, with a two per cent engagement rate (averaging 25 clicks per month) evidenced by users clicking on posts, links and images.

Our #iknowasd hashtag – part of a social media campaign designed to encourage the ASD and wider communities to talk and learn about ASD – assisted us in gaining visits and posts to the Autism SA Instagram page.

Created to filter and direct social media users to a single thread of conversation, #iknowasd accompanied a range of Instagram images posted by people with ASD, families, supporters, allied health professionals, Autism SA staff and others.

As a result of the April 2014 launch of Autism SA’s new website, we experienced significant growth in web traffic throughout the financial year, with 52,710 people accessing the site – 58.3 per cent of whom were new visitors. We recorded more than 73,000 webpage views, with visitors accessing general information about ASD, educational insights into ASD, and details specific to services and support.

The survey – which demonstrated a clear demand for additional services for late teens and adults - highlighted the need for further outreach to country and regional Australia and increased communication about the services offered by our team.

Autism SA has since established an Intake Consultant role to identify services of relevance to the individuals we support and assist the ASD community to navigate the NDIS path.

We have developed a suite of user friendly written and online materials to better inform those with ASD, their families and carers, improved consistency of information provided to consumers, and established a program of seminars and workshops targeted to our market. We have also begun work on the development of an autism friendly charter to support awareness and acceptance of ASD.

Further development of Autism SA’s services and support is planned for the year ahead as we implement our new holistic service model.

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING OUR SERVICES

Our readiness to meet the challenges posed by the NDIS and Autism SA’s ability to support service users in transitioning to the new funding environment were measured as part of a survey undertaken by our organisation this year.

Distributed to the ASD community via our social and digital media platforms, the survey unearthed a range of information about services currently and previously accessed, the average age of users, and additional services being sought by our community.

Among the most requested services for future consideration and delivery by Autism SA were support groups for parents and siblings, online education and training, employment services/ assistance to transition those with ASD from high school to employment, and psychology, physiotherapy and social work support.

THE NIGHT THE CARNIVAL CAME TO TOWN

In June, more than 650 people joined Autism SA and disability sector peer Minda for A Night in Rio – a carnival of food, dance and entertainment held at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

The gala event brought to Adelaide the fun, colour and atmosphere of the world’s carnival capital and invited individual and corporate supporters to join two of the state’s leading charities to celebrate the lives of people living with disabilities.

Guests were entertained by former Australian Idol contestant, Rob Mills, who hosted the spectacular with prominent Paralympian Katrina Webb. Party band, The Flaming Sambuccas, added further flair to the event.

Through corporate partnerships, auctions, ticket sales and donations, more than $80,000 was raised by the two organisations – much needed funds to continue our work supporting individuals with ASD as well as their families and carers.

“THE NIGHT’S SUCCESS WAS A TESTAMENT TO THE ORGANISERS, VOLUNTEERS, DONORS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY – THE ATTENDEES... OUR SINCERE THANKS TO ALL FOR THEIR INTEREST AND SUPPORT.”

BARRIE ELVISH, AUTISM SA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Highlights

**Autism SA Engages Community in ASD Discussion**

April saw us celebrating Autism Awareness Month, with a range of activities staged to encourage understanding and acceptance of individuals, families and carers living with ASD.

ASD affects one in every 100 people and the disability is a daily challenge for those on the autism spectrum, as well as their parents, brothers, sisters and extended families.

During April, we established awareness stalls at a broad range of high traffic public venues. More than 2000 people visited to discuss ways in which they could lend a hand and show their support to those affected by ASD.

Autism SA also assisted the community and the organisation’s corporate partners to host more than 50 ‘Purple Picnic’ events - a public engagement concept aimed at starting conversations about ASD and raising both awareness and much needed funding.

**Global ASD Authority Speaks in Adelaide**

A world authority on ASD, Dr Jed Baker visited Adelaide in June 2015 to present a one day workshop to the Autism SA community.

Delivered to a 350 strong audience of parents, carers, teachers and allied health professionals, ‘No more meltdowns: Effective interventions for behavioural and social challenges’ explored a range of issues impacting those with ASD and offered strategies for effective management.

Among those who held picnics were Adelaide Convention Centre, Careers Australia and the Minister for Disabilities, the Hon. Tony Piccolo, MP.

Throughout the month-long program of events, educational information was distributed and a wide range of Autism SA merchandise was sold. Discussions facilitated by our staff and volunteer educators revealed that 85 per cent of awareness stall and picnic attendees were aware of Autism SA’s role as the leading authority on ASD and/or knew someone on the autism spectrum.

Community reach was further extended when our team secured substantial media coverage of Autism Awareness Month. ASD was reported on and discussed in the print, radio and television mediums, as well as through various online platforms.

**“A Very Knowledgeable, Articulate Speaker Who Was Really Good at Melding Theory and Practice.”**

WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

Among the topics covered were how understanding our clients and ourselves precedes effective intervention, de-escalating meltdowns and setting up prevention plans for seven common triggers, six key components of skills training, and motivation, skill training strategies and peer sensitivity.

US-based Dr Baker is the director of the Social Skills Training Project, an organisation supporting individuals with ASD and social communication challenges. He is also a member of the professional advisory board of Autism Today, ASPEN, ANSWER, YAI, the Kelberman Center and several other autism organisations.

An award winning author, Dr Baker provides training across the globe and his work has been featured on ABC World News, Nightline, Fox News, the CBS Early Show, and the Discovery Health Channel.

Dr Baker’s engaging presentation style ensured participants in the workshop - hosted by Autism SA and sponsored by AAP - received detailed information in a user friendly format designed for effective implementation outside of the learning environment.

**Putting Our Best Foot Forward**

Autism SA staff and supporters donned their joggers and hit the Adelaide roads for the 2014 Sunday Mail City-Bay fun run, raising community awareness of ASD during our 50th anniversary year.

The 170 strong crew of runners, walkers and volunteers created a sea of purple, turning out in Autism SA t-shirts and singlets and raising $17,000 along the way.

Pre-event promotion was provided by our media sponsor Fresh 92.7, which also awarded prizes for our swiftest male and female runners. Volunteers from the Hyde Park Rotary Club cooked up a barbeque breakfast feast to feed those attending post-race celebrations.

Support for Autism SA was also provided by Steggs - We’re Stegglers, Nippy’s, B-d Farm Paris Creek, Bill Papas & Sons and Brumby’s – with each company supplying food and beverages for participants and those attending our promotional stand at the finish line.
With bright eyes and an infectious smile, Mark walks into the home of family friends to begin his weekly art class.

An engaging young man with a passion for creating, he immediately gravitates toward a jumble of brushes, paints, pens and canvases and begins composing a picture that swiftly takes its shape.

Throughout his life, Mark has built an impressive portfolio of work - hundreds of paintings and drawings that show the world through his eyes. With a clear gift for the arts, he is one of many people with ASD who use their unique talents to offer others an entry point into their space.

But it wasn’t always so. Following a childhood diagnosis of ASD and intellectual disability - and later, anxiety and physical health issues - Mark sustained an acquired brain injury after a fall around the time of his 30th birthday.

Having previously assisted him to successfully transition into supported accommodation, his parents Kathy and Ray and sister Leah soon recognised Mark’s accident had resulted in a rapid decline in not only his health, but also his independence and general sense of wellbeing. He was shutting down.

“He just wasn’t coping,” said Kathy. “Over a period of several months he was in and out of hospitals and rehabilitation centres and he tried returning to his old house, but that wasn’t successful.”

As time went on, because of the brain injury, he became more and more frightened and aggressive. Eventually, we found alternative accommodation, but he ended up back in hospital and we didn’t know what to do.”

With the 2012 festive season fast approaching, Mark’s family maintained a schedule of twice daily visits to see him in hospital and continued their search for a solution. Exhausted, and seemingly facing obstacles at every turn, Kathy said everything changed after she and Ray received a call from Autism SA.

“The phone rang and they said they were happy to provide short term respite for Mark. On Christmas Eve, when everyone else was at parties, they had organised a house for our son and they had staff ready to support him. They were fabulous,” she said.

In the months that followed, Autism SA worked with Mark and his family to secure permanent accommodation and the around-the-clock support he required to help him return to his former life.

“Autism SA is extraordinary. We were at the point of thinking we might have to relinquish our son in order to get help. We didn’t know what to do,” said Kathy.

“Often, Ray and I wondered if there was anyone out there who would listen.”

“The people who support Mark now have had an obvious commitment to developing his wellbeing from the very beginning, and as a result, he has continued to develop in all areas of his life.”

“The people who support Mark now have had an obvious commitment to developing his wellbeing from the very beginning, and as a result, he has continued to develop in all areas of his life.”

As Mark began to feel safe and secure in his new home, and as he started to recover from the brain injury, his family soon noticed an improvement in his behaviour. As time progressed, Kathy, Ray and Leah were delighted to see Mark again enjoying his day options program, bike rides, gardening, holidays with friends, outings with his family, and the art classes he had once adored.

“Mark is a great artist, but for a long time after his accident he was not engaged with his creativity,” said Kathy.

“Lately, thanks to Autism SA, we are seeing the old, beautiful Mark. He is excited, loving and affectionate. He has a zest for life and just enjoys everything. He has certainly come a long way.”

THE ARTWORK DISPLAYED ON THE FRONT COVER AND CONTENTS PAGE OF THIS ANNUAL REPORT WAS CREATED BY MARK.
Services and Support

Preparing for the full implementation of the NDIS brought about a restructure of our services and support portfolio during 2014/15, with Autism SA aligning its delivery model with the funding environment within which our clients will now operate.

Work commenced on transitioning from our previous departmental structure to new client support areas that include Community Support & Inclusion, Clinical Support Services, Community Development & Education and Specialised Support Services.

During the 2014/15 financial year, the following work was undertaken to support people with ASD, their families and carers.

### AUTISM ADVISOR PROGRAM

In its final year of operation in SA, AAP assisted families previously funded under the HCWA Package to move over to the NDIS.

Following the introduction of the Scheme in 2013, and during the NDIS trial period in SA, AAP operated under a variation of a grant agreement that differed from other states and territories. The agreement saw the withdrawal of federal funding provided through HCWA to children aged up to seven years who were newly diagnosed with ASD, with those children instead to be covered by the NDIS.

Across the year, AAP provided families and carers with pre-diagnostic support to navigate service pathways, post-diagnostic information and support services, and support and assistance with preparing and planning NDIS plan goals and developing individualised transition to school plans.

AAP SA had contact with 530 families/carers and provided 155 supplementary appointments for this group (in addition to the HCWA transfer of registration appointments). These appointments took place face to face and via telephone.

Early Days Workshops were also delivered and families received quarterly newsletters and tailored information to keep them up to date about AAP and other relevant services and supports.

In the Northern Territory (NT), AAP continued to support families to access HCWA funding and our team worked to raise awareness of ASD in the NT – particularly among indigenous populations.

A large part of Autism SA’s role in NT during 2014/15 involved the provision of support and facilitation of Early Days Workshops to families in regional and remote areas. 124 participants attended 14 workshops held in NT.

Across both SA and NT, AAP participated in numerous networking and promotional events to raise awareness of ASD and highlight the services provided by Autism SA. Our team provided capacity building workshops to families, carers and professionals and, in particular, built connections with children and family centres in both metropolitan and regional areas.

AAP SA facilitated four targeted ASD awareness presentations to 63 NDIA planners, local area coordinators and associated staff. The Program also sponsored a large number of meetings. This led to other networking opportunities and sharing of information; and

- Networking with early years service providers to raise awareness of ASD and highlight the services provided by Autism SA.
- Continued attendance at Australian Refugee Association (SA) bimonthly interagency committee meetings. This led to other networking opportunities and sharing of information; and
- Liaison with the African Women’s Association providing in-house training to Autism SA staff on how to best engage and discuss ASD with African families and carers.

- People attended counselling sessions, including family workshops
Services and Support

“THIS SERVICE SUPPORTED NOT ONLY THE CHILD, BUT PARENTS AND TEACHERS. TOGETHER WE HAD A COMMON LANGUAGE THAT THE CHILD COULD USE AT HOME AND SCHOOL TO MANAGE HIS BEHAVIOUR.” – TEACHER

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Our work in the education and training space continued to gain momentum during 2014/15 as the ASD community sought information about the current and future NDIS funding arrangements – and associated services and support.

Autism SA held 35 workshops at its Netley headquarters and a further five in greater Adelaide and outreach regions, including Clare Valley, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier and Darwin. During the month of April, five ‘Spotlight’ presentations were offered and more than 100 tailored training sessions were held at specific sites – including the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), the Catholic Education Office (CEO), in independent schools, and at other organisations.

Education and training topics addressed by Autism SA staff across the year included:

- An introduction to ASD;
- Strategies to support individuals with ASD;
- Best practice for engaging students with ASD in the classroom;
- Supporting students with ASD for School Support Officers/ Educational Support Officers;
- Setting students with ASD up for success in primary school;
- Setting students with ASD up for success in high school;
- Using visual supports effectively for people with ASD;
- Proactive prevention of meltdowns for people with ASD;
- The anxiety curve: what to do when a child is getting stressed and having a meltdown;
- Implementing ‘The Incredible 5-Point Scale’ for people on the autism spectrum;
- Understanding and accommodating sensory processing challenges from an occupational therapist;
- Teaching social skills to people with ASD;
- Setting up ‘A’ and ‘B’ choices in the classroom;
- An occupational therapy approach to handwriting;
- How to support people with ASD in the workplace;
- iMsocial – social skills and video modelling;
- The power of peers: raising awareness of the autism spectrum in the classroom;
- How school counsellors can support individuals with autism and their families; and
- Special Needs Coordinators Day.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND CLINICAL SERVICES & SPECTRUM ADVISORY SERVICES

Autism SA continued to support families with post diagnostic support and information and assisted them to prepare for NDIS planning appointments. Staff also provided people with ASD and/or their families with short term counselling and behaviour support.

Autism SA’s speech pathologists and occupational therapists continued to provide services to individuals and their families across a wide variety of settings, and our team delivered family workshops and free service training and development for professionals.

Consultants provided consultancy services to kindergartens and in-home services to parents and carers on topics including toiletting and transitioning to school.

Our Foundation Skills Group provided a trans-disciplinary group program based on the SCERTS® model for children aged between three and five years, enhancing a variety of life and developmental skills/areas.

Activity undertaken through our social development groups had a particular focus on adolescents and adults during 2014/15, with new programs including Around the Table and SNAP Social being introduced alongside existing groups.

Diagnostic Services continued to be a leader in the field of diagnosis of ASD in SA and provided diagnosis training to professionals in the field.

Many of our services are transitioning to funding under the NDIS and we continue to expand the support provided by Autism SA to our community. Dedicated information and communication officers were employed during the year to coordinate the work of Autism SA’s Infline and manage our online library/e-books. Work in this area will expand further during the year ahead to include community information and engagement and the development of an autism friendly charter.
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Our Community Services team continued to expand, providing individualised services with a person-centred approach, including day options, respite and accommodation support.

Our Community Services highlights included:
- Commencing full accommodation service – transitioned from another provider for an adolescent with complex needs and the requirement for around-the-clock support provided on a two-to-one basis;
- Continued support for two adults accommodated in their own tenancies;
- Commencing transition for a young adult to move out of home, into her own property;
- Growing and diversifying our individualised community and respite support for clients; and
- Successfully commencing a number of NDIS respite packages for families.

SCHOOL INCLUSION PROGRAM

Autism SA continued to support children with ASD and their schools through our School Inclusion Program. Consultants provided services to teachers and support staff to ensure ASD awareness and capacity was built within public, Catholic and independent school environments. Our facilitators also provided one-to-one and small group support to people with ASD.

Each year, the School Inclusion Program – provided in metropolitan, regional and remote areas – offers support to increasing numbers of people and is facilitated across a growing map of locations.

"WE COULDN’T HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH THIS WITHOUT THEM.” – PARENT

STUDENTS RECEIVING ASD FACILITATOR SUPPORT:

- FOCUSED ON SOCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT
  - 89% achieved their goals in the allocated timeframe
  - 11% made some progress and continue working toward achieving their goals

- FOCUSED ON SELF REGULATION AND DECREASING ANXIETY
  - 92% achieved their goals in the allocated timeframe
  - 8% made some progress and continue working toward achieving their goals

CHANGE IS A CONSTANT IN THE DISABILITY SECTOR AND NEVER MORE SO THAN THROUGHOUT THE 2014/15 YEAR.

During the past 12 months, Autism SA has focused its efforts on preparing the organisation and the people it supports for the full roll-out of the NDIS and the consequent impact the new funding model will have on our community.

With children aged less than six years transitioning to the Scheme across the year, and an older cohort earmarked for subsequent inclusion, our team continued to advocate for those with ASD, their families and carers to ensure their support and service needs were met.

In the two years that have passed since the launch of the NDIS pilot in July 2013, 4660 people have obtained approved plans with the NDIA, and almost half of those (2270 individuals) have been identified as having autism or other related disorders.

The NDIS is scheduled for full implementation during 2018 and, as negotiations continued between the state and commonwealth governments regarding the Scheme’s funding model and approach to delivery, Autism SA delivered on its purpose, providing a strong voice for, and with, the ASD community.

Our Board, management and staff worked with both state and federal agencies to ensure recognition of the importance of adhering to best practice standards and criteria for diagnosis. Our team endeavoured to highlight the essential part diagnosis plays in creating a profile of an individual’s condition, identifying lifelong impact and providing options for meaningful therapy intervention and support. This activity occurred both independently and as part of our work with the NDIS Expert Group in Autism and the Autism Co-operative Research Centre.

The Research Centre is currently tasked with identifying the hallmarks of ‘gold standard’ diagnostic practice – with SA leading the way – while the Expert Group in Autism is focusing its efforts on early intervention therapies and supports, ensuring they are founded in evidence-based practice.

During 2014/15, in our role as the lead provider to the ASD community in SA, Autism SA also prepared submissions in response to disability standards for education, disability and access to education and co-morbidity and mental health.

Working directly with people with ASD, their families and carers – and recognising the critical importance of supporting our community through the implementation of the NDIS – Autism SA introduced a goal setting tool to guide people through their dealings with the NDIA.

Therapeutic and behavioural support services are still highly sought after. Most occupational therapy and speech pathology services are now delivered under an NDIS plan and, as we move to introduce the older age cohort to the Scheme, the demand for respite and behaviour support services (one-to-one, in home, in school and at clinics) will continue to grow.

Autism SA staff developed their skills and competencies throughout the year, positioning the organisation to meet our community’s evolving needs. Alongside this, we maintained our status as the preferred employer in the sector, resulting in the additional recruitment of staff with multidisciplinary skills and experience of working with a broad range of people with disabilities.

There is no doubt the NDIS continues to create implementation challenges for all concerned. At such a critical time for the ASD community it is essential Autism SA remains at the forefront of the sector and, with this in mind, we recently appointed an NDIS Senior Project Officer to ensure we remain relevant and innovative throughout the coming years.

With the incidence of ASD growing at a faster rate than any other disability, the focus of resources must be on the populations of most need. During 2015/16, we will continue to deliver this message on behalf of the ASD community, advocating that state and commonwealth governments must agree on an appropriate transition plan to full implementation of the NDIS if we are to ensure the best outcomes for those with ASD.
The move toward full implementation of the NDIS drove a review of Autism SA’s workforce during 2014/15, as we readied ourselves for the changing landscape amid which our organisation will operate.

With many of our workforce projects coming to life across the 12-month period, a number of new initiatives were commenced or implemented, including a revised organisational structure, improved human resources functions, and new on-boarding and e-recruitment systems.

The reshaping of our workforce was endorsed by the Autism SA Board and a structure was developed by our leadership team to ensure we remain as the lead provider of services to the ASD community.

To assist with creating a strategic roadmap for the organisation, analysis of workforce data was undertaken by the newly formed Workforce Team, with insights gained into areas including the age ratio of Autism SA staff, employee numbers across occupational groups, years of service, turnover and other factors critical to the development of a sustainable service led business.

Embraced by the staff of Autism SA, the Workforce Development Strategy framework & key Projects 2014/15 established a firm foundation for the ongoing operation of the business and set in place a structure that enables our people to confidently face the Australian disability sector’s future challenges.

Throughout 2014/15, much of the human resources focused activity undertaken by our leadership team was guided by feedback provided by Autism SA staff during forums and workshops, and in response to surveys and requests for input.

The future proofing of our business relies on the ongoing development of a strong and sustainable workforce charged with delivering best practice service and support to the ASD community.

STAFF MILESTONES
We also celebrated the ongoing commitment of staff who have reached milestone years of service. In 2014/15, these staff included:

- 5 years of service
  Natasha Boots, Tracey Pinter, Vijender Singh, Sharon Stansbury, Carissa Walker, Niki Welz
- 10 years of service
  Michael Heathcote, Paul Moroney, David Palmer, Michael Sicluna
- 15 years of service
  Greg Healy
- 20 years of service
  Amanda Harris

WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY REPORT
In accordance with the requirements of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012, on 27 May 2015 Autism SA lodged its annual public report with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The report is available on the Autism SA website at: www.autismsa.org.au
## Board of Directors

**Autism SA Board of Directors**

Autism SA has a diverse Board of Directors structured to represent the interests of the ASD community and to bring a range of expertise to ensure the effective governance of the organisation. The 2014/15 Board was comprised of the following people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Qualifications:</th>
<th>Position:</th>
<th>Committees:</th>
<th>Attendances at meetings:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Karavolos</td>
<td>B.Acc, CPA, MBA [Brooke Scholar], AIPM</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>10 Board meetings + AGM + 10 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Mohler</td>
<td>B.Com</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>10 Board meetings + AGM + 9 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Dale</td>
<td>B.Com, Llib (Hons), GDP, Notary Public</td>
<td>Board Appointed Director</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10 Board meetings + AGM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie McMillan</td>
<td>PhD, Med, BTeach</td>
<td>Board Appointed Director (Appointed 8/4/2015)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 Board meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Williams</td>
<td>MBA, B.Mgmt, Dip IT</td>
<td>Client Representative Director</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>10 Board meetings + AGM + 3 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bannie Elvish</td>
<td>BA, Grad Dip (Ed), MBA, GAICD</td>
<td>Managing Director, Company Secretary (Appointed 3/12/2014)</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>5 Board meetings + 5 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Davies</td>
<td>BSc, PGCE, Dip Mgmt</td>
<td>Company Secretary (Appointed 4/08/2014 Retired 2/12/2014)</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>4 Board meetings + AGM + 3 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darren Gibbins</td>
<td>MBA, Dip Mgmt</td>
<td>Board Appointed Director (Retired 18/3/2015)</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>7 Board meetings + AGM + 6 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raphael Murphy</td>
<td>B.Bus (Mkt), MPASR, GPMR (AMSR)</td>
<td>Vice President, Client Representative Director (Retired 25/2/2015)</td>
<td>Finance &amp; Risk Committee</td>
<td>6 Board meetings + AGM + 5 Finance &amp; Risk Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Davey</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Board Appointed Director (Retired 26/11/2014)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 Board meetings + AGM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Martin</td>
<td>BA [Psych], Grad Dip [Psych], Grad Cert (HR Mgmt)</td>
<td>Director, Company Secretary (Retired 1/8/2014)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1 Board meeting + AGM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Governance Statement

### Autism SA Governance Statement

The Board is required to act in accordance with the objects of the Autism SA Constitution to:

1. **Lead performance improvement of Autism SA** through strategy formulation, policy development and monitoring management actions; and
2. **Ensure compliance of Autism SA** and the correct conduct of Directors both as individuals and collectively, as a Board.

The Board is comprised of no less than six and no more than nine Directors, and will include two Client representative Directors, between three and six Board Appointed Directors with the skills and expertise that the Board determines it requires, and the Managing Director of the Company.

### Corporate Governance Statement

The Charter clarifies the responsibilities and boundaries of the Board in setting the strategy and direction of Autism SA and managing and controlling the organisation. As extracted from Autism SA’s Board Charter “Autism SA is a Company Limited by Guarantee and operates as a non-for-profit organisation with the status of a health promotion charity. It is governed by a constitution approved by members.”.

### Membership

Membership of the Company comprises of two classes: Ordinary Members and Associate Members who pay an annual fee. For further information regarding organisational membership please refer to the constitution of Autism SA published publicly on the Company website at www.autismsa.org.au

### Ethical Standards

Autism SA is committed to maintaining the highest of ethical standards. The organisation follows good practice in governance to ensure integrity and influence. To this end, the Company has developed extensive policies and maintains third party certification against the Service Excellence Framework (SEF) as part of our quality assurance and continuous improvement framework.

### Privacy Policy

Autism SA values support from the community and is committed to ensuring the privacy of the personal information that is entrusted to the organisation. The respect for privacy forms part of the ongoing trust the organisation wishes to maintain with stakeholders.

Further details regarding the Board and Autism SA’s financial position are outlined in the audited financial report for the year ended 30 June 2015. This report can be obtained online from www.autismsa.org.au
The net financial result for the consolidated activities of the Autism Association of South Australia and the Autism Trust Fund of South Australia for the year ended 30 June 2015 was a deficit of $72,748. This represents a significant decrease from the surplus of $489,723 recorded for the year ended 30 June 2014, which was generated primarily by the successful Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC) held in August 2013.

The total income for the consolidated entity for the year ended 30 June 2015 has decreased by 10 per cent from the prior year. This reduction can primarily be attributed to the extraordinary income generated in the 2013/14 year as a result of APAC. This change is evident in the 69 per cent decrease in events and fundraising income for 2014/15 as compared to 2013/14 (refer Chart 1).

Government funding decreased by six per cent from the prior year as a result of the rollout of the NDIS. The decrease in government funding, offset by an increase in fee for service income, is a trend which is expected to continue in future years as the rollout of the NDIS progresses.

The change in the proportion of government funding compared to fee for service income is illustrated in the graphs (refer Chart 2). Investment revenue increased in 2014/15 by 55 per cent as compared to 2013/14, resulting from an increase in portfolio holdings.

The change in the proportion of government funding compared to fee for service income is summarised in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 - Profit and Loss Position</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating revenue</td>
<td>8,917,038</td>
<td>9,945,049</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating expenses</td>
<td>8,989,786</td>
<td>9,455,326</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net surplus/(deficit)</td>
<td>(72,748)</td>
<td>489,723</td>
<td>-115%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenses have decreased by five per cent from the prior year. This decrease is a direct result of additional APAC expenditure in 2013/14. The level of this decrease is offset by an increase in employee benefit expenses in the current year, resulting from increased employee numbers and increasing pay rates.

The financial performance of the consolidated entity is summarised in Table 1 below: The net asset position of the consolidated entity decreased from $3,237,215 as at 30 June 2014 to $3,172,260 as at 30 June 2015, as presented in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 - Balance Sheet</th>
<th>As at 30/6/15</th>
<th>As at 30/6/14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current assets</td>
<td>1,167,878</td>
<td>1,144,642</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncurrent assets</td>
<td>3,620,046</td>
<td>3,575,897</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total assets</td>
<td>4,787,924</td>
<td>4,720,539</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current liabilities</td>
<td>1,485,226</td>
<td>1,336,095</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncurrent liabilities</td>
<td>130,438</td>
<td>147,228</td>
<td>-11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total liabilities</td>
<td>1,615,664</td>
<td>1,483,323</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
<td>3,172,260</td>
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Available-for-sale financial assets increased due to additional share holdings during the year, rather than increased portfolio market value, reflecting difficult market conditions arising from world events. The value of intangible assets increased due to investment in a CRM System. Total liabilities increased by nine per cent due primarily to increased payroll accruals attributable to higher staffing levels.

The Financial Report of the Autism Association of South Australia and controlled entity for the year ended 30 June 2015 has been audited by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and copies are available at www.autismsa.org.au.

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It is often noted that people with ASD count among the world’s most brilliant minds. From insightful entrepreneurs to straight A students, maths geniuses to gifted artists, excelling at their chosen field is a widely recognised hallmark of many of those on the spectrum.

In 2014, with a desire to harness the strengths of our nation’s ASD community, Danish company Specialist People Foundation secured the backing of the Federal Government and global technology giant Hewlett-Packard to launch its social business concept, the Dandelion Program, in Australia.

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As an initiative based on social entrepreneurship, corporate sector engagement and global mindset change, the Program was created in Denmark after the son of its founder, Thorkil Sonne, was diagnosed with autism. Pairing people with ASD with employing organisations,

Those selected for the internships have since joined teams of people using Hewlett-Packard’s testing methods and tools to undertake software testing within the Department of Human Services (DHS).

In addition to the training provided by HP Australia and Specialist People Foundation, those undertaking the Dandelion Program internships also access further education through Open Universities Australia and the University of South Australia.

“This is the perfect partnership for our introduction into Australia and we are looking forward to seeing the benefits of this project, just as we have seen overseas,” said Mr Sonne.

Turning Disability Into Special Ability
A personal connection to ASD coupled with a corporate ideology based on social responsibility are the founding pillars of the relationship between Autism SA and privately owned Australian business Baiada Poultry. As a long standing supporter of Autism SA, Baiada has funded a wide range of projects directly benefitting the ASD community and aided our organisation to purchase tools critical to the provision of services and support.

"We recognise that charitable organisations like Autism SA require ongoing assistance from businesses like ours," said Baiada’s South Australian General Manager, Dada Hu. "Our company policy – and our owner’s intent and belief – is very clear. We want to give something back to society and all of the people who work here believe that is the right thing to do."

Now one of our closest business partners, Baiada entered the SA poultry market in 2004 and continued an association with Autism SA that was first formed by the business’ previous owners after a member of their family was diagnosed with ASD. In the many years that have since followed, Baiada’s Children’s Charity Nest has been the often silent benefactor behind an enormous number of Autism SA activities.

"Throughout the years there has been so much work undertaken by Autism SA that simply would not have been possible without the support and generosity of Autism SA activities.

Mr Elvish said a remarkable range of projects had been delivered using funding provided by The Children’s Charity Nest – including refurbishment of a respite house for children with ASD, installation of therapy and training rooms at our Netley headquarters, the purchase of iPads and apps for use across Autism SA, and the development of educational resources for people with ASD, their families and carers.

Funds have been raised through Baiada’s salary sacrifice program and via product sales and donations made by the company and its associates. Staff run activities, including gold coin donation days, barbecues, raffles, recycling drives and sponsored participation in community events, have also contributed to the overall financial commitment made by The Children’s Charity Nest.

"As our business has grown, so too has the awareness of our management, staff and suppliers about ASD," said Mr Hu. "Over time we have seen more and more people joining us to support this excellent cause."

"The Autism SA/Baiada relationship may bring no immediate commercial benefit to our business, but we firmly believe it contributes to our positive workplace culture and the creation of a ‘feel good factor’ to everything that we do."
Thank You

Patron
Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce
AC CSC RANR, Governor of South Australia
*Patronage ended 1/09/2014 upon completion of term as Governor of South Australia

Life Members
Roma Aimes
Mary Angel
Rose Baker
Assoc Prof Venty Batloff
Richard Bruggemmann
Jean Bryant
Cheryl Casey
Jean Cox
Lloyd Cox
Betty Davis+
Ken Fogg+
Leigh Hall OAM
Ruth Halpin
John Harley
Nerida Higgins+
Jay Johnes
Hilary Johnson AM+
Betty Jordan OAM
Dr Margaret Kyrkou
Judith Leeson,
Dr Ruth McIntyre
David McLean
Anne Nottage
Valerie Retallick+
John Rosevear
Max Saun+
Matthew Tiddy
Dr Peter Tillett
Bernhard Vought
Dudley Wilson+
Margaret Wilson
(+ denotes deceased)

Autism SA Ambassadors
Katherine Annear
Jean Bouwer
Gloria Bryant
Brooke Clark
Katy Correll
Abby-Leigh Dalton
Tara Davis
Matt Deighton
Nadia Demasi
Kriste Dix
Lachlan Earl
Alison Gasain
Barbara Green
Julie Julyan
Alison Keast
Stephanie Kawalski
Stephen Laveridge
Vivienne Mangos
Jan Martin
Bruce Meatheringham
Kathryn Michaelisen
Helan Neale
David Palmer
Annette Paterson
Melissa Poole
Kirsten Richards
Linda Sandall
Zoe Sandell
Tamar Semecki
Charlie Stone
Miwa Stynes
Julie Taylor
Amanda Toole-Haskins
Donna Webb
Diane Whicker-Lockwood
Josie Wilson
Stewart Wymer

Major Corporate Partner
Baiada Poultry - Children’s Charity Nest

Corporate Partners
Terry White Chemists
Coopers

Brand, Digital and Print Partners
Alpha Store
DBG Technologies
Queens Court Press

Supporting Partners
AOI
Australian Broadcasting
Commission
Barfluro
B.D. Farm Paris Creek
Bill Papas & Sons
CBS Inc
Clifton’s
Clipper 500
Company @ Autistic Theatre
David Jones
Deloitte
Evans & Clarke Auctioneers
everydayhero
Fay Fuller Foundation
Flinders University
Glencloy Football Club
GoFundraise
Hotel Royal
Lions International
Liquor Industry Golf Club
of SA Inc
Marnis Financial Group
Morphettville
Nippy’s
Positive Partnerships
Rotary International
Saab
Street Fleet
Subnet
The Hacket Foundation
Tutti
University of Adelaide
University of SA
Variety
Vili’s

“OUR SCHOOL HAS ALWAYS HAD EXCELLENT SUPPORT FROM AUTISM SA. WHENEVER WE HAVE SOUGHT SUPPORT PROGRAMS, THE PERSONNEL HAVE DELIVERED THEM WITH EXTREME SKILL, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE. THEY ALWAYS GAIN A FANTASTIC RAPPORT WITH OUR STUDENTS. WE WISH WE COULD HAVE THESE SUPPORT SERVICES MORE OFTEN.” – TEACHER
The Spectrum with all Shades of Awesome

Watching him playfully engage with his supporters in the therapy rooms at Autism SA, most observers would have no idea of the uphill battle that Cillian has faced throughout his short life.

“Throw the beanbag, throw the beanbag…” – with an impish grin and amid peals of laughter, the sweet five-year-old chips happily as he works at his regular occupational therapy session, where he is rewarded with a nurturing cuddle from his mother Jean.

For a little boy, who only a few short years ago was struggling to keep up with his peers, his progress has been remarkable.

It was just before Cillian’s third birthday that Jean and her husband Matt first noticed their son had difficulty interacting with others, observing a lack of self confidence and independence that resulted in anxiety for Cillian.

“Friends had picked it, but they didn’t know how to raise it. Matt was the first one to say something,” said Jean.

“As a mother, I had answers and excuses for everything that Cillian did. Somewhere, somehow, I knew something was wrong, but my instinct was to protect him and see the best in him.”

After researching ASD and speaking with a friend who worked as a psychologist, Jean and Matt began the journey toward diagnosis and better understanding Cillian and his world.

“I wasn’t keen to have a label put on him,” said Jean. “Cillian has none of our preconceived ideas of what autism looks like. He recites whole Dr Seuss books, smiles all the time, gives us kisses and lets us cuddle him. It just didn’t make sense and we were filled with fear and endless questions.”

“But then, a speech pathologist provided Cillian with an initial diagnosis of high functioning autism and we went from there.

“Our paediatrician, who provided the second diagnosis, said ‘this is not a sprint, it’s a marathon’ and it was then that we first came into contact with Autism SA.

“All of a sudden we realised that somebody had us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody had us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us. We were falling down a big black hole and somebody caught us.

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In the time since receiving his diagnosis, Cillian’s development has been exceptional. He has had sessions with psychologists, become involved with a social skills group, and shown incredible commitment to his speech and occupational therapy.

“His progress has been so fantastic and we feel very blessed for the help we’ve received.”

Today, Cillian’s communication and comprehension skills are at the expected level for children of his age. His social skills are developing and he enjoys skateboarding, climbing, swimming and playing football with his family and friends at his Montessori preschool.

“Cillian is such an affectionate child. Every day he says or does something that makes us feel like the luckiest parents in the world,” said Jean.

“He is all shades of awesome right now. His mind is more engaged, he is more communicative, and he is loving life.

“We realise now that ASD was not the end of the world, it was simply the beginning of a new one.”

“We realise now that ASD was not the end of the world, it was simply the beginning of a new one.”
To help support the work of Autism SA, please make a tax deductible donation via our website at autismsa.org.au